

County clerk posts court cases online

By Melissa Firchau
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County officials hope their latest move will help everyone from senior citizens to military officials.

The county has posted a Web site that will allow users to search court case lists from the 16th Judicial Circuit Court, in Mount Clemens, on the Internet.

By entering the name of an individual, users can learn if there are any pending cases against the person or brought by the person, as well as the nature of the case.

County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh said the county has wanted to create this site for a long time, but met some resistance by Circuit Court judges, who worried the site could qualify as an invasion of privacy.

But Sabaugh argued that the lists are currently public documents, available for view in their entirety at the Clerk's Office.

Sabaugh said following the Aug. 14 blackout, the judges became more receptive to the issue.

The Clerk's Office is run on a mainframe system, which was shut down for several days following the blackout. Sabaugh said Internet access would not be affected by the mainframe's failure.

"When the power went out I was able to make the case again, because if I would have had this on the Internet, my office downstairs would have been able to do this much easier, because the mainframe isn't connected to the Internet, so we would have been able to provide service a lot quicker," Sabaugh said. "At that time (Chief Judge Peter Maceroni) really understood the need for it, and how much it would help the courts, our office and the public at large, so he was very supportive of doing this."

The site was opened to the public Nov. 13, but was taken temporarily offline after the demand exceeded its capabilities.

"They shut it down and reworked it, and now it's really fast," Sabaugh said. "Before it would take 90 seconds to retrieve information, now it takes six seconds."

Sabaugh said the system will allow residents to check for court cases against potential contractors before signing contracts, and will allow military officials to look into new recruits.

Edmond Vodochodsky, recruiter-in-charge at the Navy Recruiting Station in Mount Clemens, said the system saves him a trip to the Clerk's Office.

"It is now easier to find out if new recruits have pending court cases and whether they meet the high standards set by the Navy," Vodochodsky said.

The county office will still offer viewing of court documents, and will continue to offer copies of files for a fee.

"This service is going to really help the public and law enforcement, so we're really excited about it," Sabaugh said.

The case lists are updated each week, and can be found at www.co.macomb.mi.us/clerksoffice.

The office also offers court dockets on the 24 hour fax-on-demand service, at (888) 99-CLERK.

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